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The American Historical Review

HISTORY AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY¹

“GOD has conceded two sights to a man—
One of man’s whole work, time’s completed plan,
The other of the minute’s work, man’s first
Step to the plan’s completeness.”

These words are from the great philosophical poet of the nineteenth century, from Browning’s *Sordello*. They are the words of a poet, who sees before him in a vision the whole of human history, as if it were the sure unfolding of a foreordained plan, bringing steadily on “one far-off, divine event, to which the whole creation moves”. In other ages besides our time, in other lands besides the fatherland of the two whose words I have used, many poets have seen this vision. But not the poet alone has seen it. Philosopher and theologian have shared it with him. Ever since the broadening union of the ancient world brought to men an understanding of the common interests and common destinies of men of diverse races, this has been so. From the time when Vergil put into the mouth of the father of gods and men his prediction of an unending empire for his hero’s progeny, from the time when men spoke commonly of the eternal city, and when Christian thought made the conception its own in the idea of the eternal city of God and of righteousness, absorbing into itself in process of time all manner of men that dwell

¹ Annual address of the president of the American Historical Association, delivered at Richmond, December 29, 1908.

The best introduction to the discussion and to the literature of this subject for the historian is to be found in Bernheim’s *Lehrbuch der Historischen Methode*, third and fourth editions, 1903; fifth and sixth, 1908. Bernheim’s bibliographical references and comment are very helpful. Professor Seligman’s *Economic Interpretation of History* will also be found useful in introductory study, both on the bibliographical side, and as giving a very clear idea of the ideas and aims of one portion of the new movement in the field of history. It will be understood that in this paper I have in mind American conditions in the field of historical study.

on the face of the earth, from those days until now poets, philosophers and theologians have never ceased to behold and to proclaim a destined and knowable outcome for the efforts of mankind—a philosophy of history.

And why should they not? It is in truth a most alluring vision for any man. The mystery of the life of the race, of the final outcome of men's works and dominions, presses constantly upon us. Do all our ends and efforts tend only to temporary results, to certain reaction, and at last to the dead silence of the moon, or to a millennial age of universal good to whose more speedy coming all the generations contribute? Any answer to this question is sure of a hearing. The temptation to try to solve the problem, we all of us know at times.

But this is to be remembered, professed historians have given very little attention to this side of their subject. The men who have made it their special business to compile and preserve the record of the past action of the race, who would claim for themselves a peculiar right to the name of historians, have not concerned themselves with final results. If we add to the idea of the philosophy of history, as we ought, the related idea of the science of history, to make it include the process as well as the result, to include the question of the operation of law in history, the fact is the same. Turn over the pages of Flint's *History of the Philosophy of History*, and you will find that the names of historians are conspicuous by their absence. Without attempting any minute analysis, or close classification, we may say that historians who wrote before the nineteenth century fall into one or the other of two groups: first, those whose object was primarily to make the record of past events, to tell the story, to let posterity know what happened, without ulterior design; and second, those who were first of all anxious to produce literature, who desired indeed to tell the truth about the actions they described and to make them known to the future, but whose controlling motive was art rather than knowledge, the hope of earning name and fame for themselves among the great writers of the day. In neither of these classes do we find men who have greatly concerned themselves either with the science or the philosophy of history. They have merely endeavored to tell artlessly, or with all possible art, what happened.

About eighty years ago a new and profound influence began to make itself felt upon those who were engaged in studying and recording what had happened in the past. It was an influence towards more scientific methods of studying the facts of history. I am sure I do not need to describe to this audience the ideals of

the young Ranke, in the twenties of the last century, nor their results for historical studies. They have indeed been described better than I could do it, in an earlier meeting of this Association, by one whose voice we shall not hear again, and whose own fine examples of scientific work remain as models and incentives to us all.² I do not mean to say that this great movement of the nineteenth century in the field of our interest was due to Ranke alone. It was not. But it was due to him more than to any other one man and we may most easily associate it with his name. I have called this movement scientific, but it should be clearly perceived that I am using this word now with a very different range of meaning from that in which I used it a moment ago when I said "the science of history". It is one thing to raise the question, Is human action dominated by law, and can we by discovering those laws construct a science of history, in the sense in which there exists a science of chemistry? It is quite a different thing to ask, Can methods of investigation which are strictly scientific be applied to the study of the past action of the race, in such a way as to give our knowledge of what happened greater certainty? The school of Ranke has never endeavored to go beyond this last question, but their answer to it has been a clear and, I believe, an indisputable affirmative. The actual result has been a science of investigation, and a method of training the future historian, which, it is not too much to say, have taken complete possession of the world of historical scholarship. At any rate it is true that all technically trained historians for more than fifty years have been trained according to these ideas and they have all found it exceedingly difficult to free themselves from the fundamental principle of their school that the first duty of the historian is to ascertain as nearly as possible and to record exactly what happened. It is not likely that historians of such training will be found to have concerned themselves with the problems of the science or of the philosophy of history to any greater extent than did their predecessors of earlier time. It remains true then that down to the present time professed historians have not dealt with these questions. They have left them to poets, philosophers and theologians.

But perfection of the methods of investigation is not the only result of the nineteenth century which affects our field of work. During the last four decades of that century, and especially during its last quarter, there arose a variety of new interests, new groups of scholars formed themselves, new points of view were occupied,

² Edward G. Bourne, *Leopold von Ranke, Annual Report of the American Historical Association* (1896), I. 67-81.

new methods were loudly proclaimed, new sciences were born and named, all concerned with the same facts of the past which it is our business to study. So closely are these new interests related to us, and to one another, in the common body of material which we must all use, that we are tempted to call them offshoots of history, to say that our broad field has begun to be divided, surveyed out into independent domains, as the still broader field once called philosophy has been dividing itself through many centuries; but the statement, though tempting, would be, at least of some of these branches, neither historically nor logically correct. Certainly their attitude towards traditional history has not been that of dutiful children towards a parent. So uniformly and severely critical have they been of the methods and purposes of the political historian, if we may use that term as a means of differentiation for the historian by name and profession, that we may almost regard their rise as an attack upon our position, systematic and concerted, and from various points at once.³ This is hardly the literal truth and yet it behooves us to understand clearly that after three-quarters of a century of practically undisputed possession of our great field of study, during which the achievements of the political historian have won the admiration and applause of the world, our right to the field is now called in question, our methods, our results and our ideals are assailed, and we are being thrown upon the defensive at many points.

The whole of this hostile movement, to continue for convenience to call it so, I do not here propose to review, but there are five lines of attack so interesting in themselves, and possessing in common so many of the features to which I wish to call especial attention, that I will ask your indulgence while I consider them in brief detail. I shall take them up in the inverse order of their own hostility to us and of the vigor of their attack.

The first to be considered then is political science. The political scientists may, with some show of justice, dispute my right to place their subject in this list. If we consider the unconnected work of individual students, it is by far the oldest of the five; and towards the work of the historian its attitude is less that of hostility than of patronizing condescension. But as a consciously organized body of knowledge and of workers this division is hardly older than the dates I have specified, and in many of its members the tendency is strong to assume that the chief end to be served by the historian is to furnish material for their science, or to put it in different phrase, that all political history is merely the effort of mankind to give objective form to the principles which political science seeks to state;

³ Bernheim, *Lehrbuch* (1903), pp. 76-126; (1908), pp. 85-145.

that history finds its explanation in these principles, that its laws will be formulated by their statement, and that the philosophy of history is the philosophy of the state.

The second movement upon our position, somewhat more aggressive in spirit, is that of the geographers. With something of the ardor of new discovery, seeming to forget that many of the suggestions which they make are also old, though their organization into a systematic whole may be comparatively new, they appear to me to be sometimes tempted by their enthusiasm to make more sweeping statements than they intend, and to advance claims of whose exact bearing they are hardly conscious. What they offer us, in the form of words they use, is a complete explanation of history. Civilization or the lack of civilization is determined by the physical surroundings and the climatic influences in which the different tribes of men have found themselves. I cannot forbear quoting a passage from a recent book, because it illustrates so well both the character of the claims advanced and the unconscious carelessness of statement in which they are made. I must add that the book is not to be judged by this quotation. The main portion of it is an unusually valuable piece of work, almost extraordinary in some respects, which has received, I do not doubt, the praise which it deserves. The scientific part of the book is as easily separated from the theoretical as the business part of the Declaration of Independence from the speculative philosophy with which it opens. Says the author: "If Percival Lowell is right, it is the dry climate of Mars which has caused the inhabitants of that planet to adopt an advanced form of social organization, where war is unknown, and each man must be keenly conscious of the interdependence of himself and the universal state." You will notice that the only point upon which any doubt is expressed is the dry climate of Mars. The civilization of that planet is known to possess certain characteristics and these may be fully accounted for by a given climate, if it exists. Now it needs no proof that the author did not intend to say exactly what he has said, but the statement is fairly typical both in the nature of the claim advanced and in the expression which is given to it. For our purpose at present, I repeat, the geographers offer us an explanation of history purporting to be adequate to account for the achievements of the race.

The third attack upon us is more formidable than either of these two. It comes from an intellectual movement which is wide in its scope, which has a truly comprehensive idea of history, and which deals with influences among the most profound which have shaped human affairs. I refer to the attempted economic explana-

tion of history, but I beg you at the outset to make a distinction. The historian of the old school, the traditional historian, has no more valuable ally than the economic historian. He whose work it is to show us how in specific cases economic forces have determined events, who helps us to understand how the facts with which we deal came to be what they are, is doing with new tools and fresh vision the same work with ourselves. The strictest disciple of the school of Ranke has never supposed that the knowledge of what happened could be made complete without the knowledge of how it happened. We do not count the economic historian proper among those who would drive us from the field. Let me ask you to notice clearly, however, that there is a great difference between economic history and that which calls itself the economic interpretation of history. So far-reaching have been the discoveries of the economic historian, so profound the influences whose operation he has uncovered, so satisfactory the explanations which he offers, that it is not strange if many have found here the final explanation of history, nor that all types of thought have been attracted to this philosophy, from the cold pessimism of Ferrero to the exuberant optimism of Professor Simon Patten. The economic interpretation of history has come to be a standard formula, and the explanation offered is in form complete. By de Graf, by Labriola, we are told that even the ideal world is the economic world; that all our notions, beliefs, sciences, manners, morals, law and philosophy find there their first explanation. Labriola calls the Reformation an economic rebellion of the German nation; E. V. Robinson in an engaging essay illustrates in the history of war the statement that the fundamental fact in history is the law of diminishing returns; Durkheim asserts that history is the progress of the principle of division of labor; while Marx declares that the history of every society up to our day has been only the history of the conflict of classes. Notice, if you please, that what we have in all these cases is once more an attempt to explain history, to get at the fundamental forces which are at work in it, to formulate the philosophy, or the science of history.

The fourth line of advance upon the historian's position is that of sociology. Let me hasten to relieve your minds of the apprehension that I am going to try to tell you what is the field of the sociologist. He is indeed lord of an uncharted domain, and I have no intention of attempting to supply him with a chart. But for our purpose an adequate statement of the ultimate objects sought has been made by a sociologist of high repute, well known to the members of this Association. According to Professor Giddings "sociology is an attempt to account for the origin, growth, structure and

activities of society by the operation of physical, vital, and psychical causes, working together in the process of evolution.”⁴ Professor Giddings’s own formulation of the fundamental law of kind; Kidd’s *Social Evolution* with its brilliant interpretation of the function of religion in history; and Forrest’s *Development of Western Civilization* with its attempt to apply still more abstract metaphysics to history, to use only examples with which we are all no doubt familiar, show that Professor Giddings’s statement of the purpose of sociology is amply confirmed. It is clear once more that what this aggressive and vigorous school of thought is seeking is an ultimate explanation of human history.

Fifth, and last, youngest of all in its advance into the field of history, is the group of the folk-psychologists, or, to call them by the better name which has more recently come into use, the social psychologists. Starting with the psychology of the individual man, modified in manifestation, law and power, as we know it to be when individuals are combined into the mass, so that there are created by a geometrically increasing force resulting from the process of union, new traits, new purposes and new energy, the social psychologists would explain great race characteristics, Roman conquest, Italian art, English literature, great historic movements, advance and reaction, Reformation and Counter-Reformation, by psychic forces whose laws of action they would formulate. They even find in the principles of their science the chief differentia of historic periods and call one age that of “conventionalism” and another that of “subjectivism”. I hardly need to remind you that here again the main endeavor of this new movement is to construct a science, or a philosophy of history.

May I pause here to ask you to notice two things? In the first place, in naming these five lines of new approach to history, I have made no attempt to characterize any of them fully. I have had in view only a special object which must be already apparent, and I have had also the general purpose of calling attention to this almost concerted movement in our field of study of which I think American students of history have taken too little notice, less notice at least than has been given to it by our colleagues in France and Germany. In the second place, in distinguishing these five from one another, I have not intended to imply that each stands wholly by itself. They do in fact overlap and cover much common territory, and even trespass upon the private preserves one of another. And yet each has some original and supplementary contribution to make to the common effort, which none of the others can furnish.

⁴ *The Principles of Sociology* (1896), p. 8.

May I delay still further to point out to you where you may find this fact, of the independence and at the same time the interdependence of these groups, strikingly illustrated, as well as the other fact that sociology, perhaps from its all-containing and somewhat indefinite nature, is in a way already the mediating, unifying group, and may go far in a final synthesis to bring the others into unity within itself. I find this illustration in the two great histories which at least this newly allied advance into the historical domain has already produced. Great they certainly are, however much we may disagree with their methods or their results, and they are especially interesting as the first promise of the harvest which the new culture may bring forth. The one is Lamprecht's *Deutsche Geschichte*; the other is Ferrero's *Grandezza e Decadenza di Roma*. So unlike are these two works in their surface characteristics that it may occasion some surprise to find them placed together, and yet the sure sense of general criticism has already made that classification. Lamprecht is a trained historian, inclining strongly in his early studies to economic history, tending to find in the stages of economic advance his first organization of the facts of history, but seeming now to have found the principles of social psychology more profoundly controlling. He still calls himself a historian, but he has been, nevertheless, often called by his critics a sociologist. Ferrero began as a sociologist and his first writings were contributions to the literature of that subject. Some of his critics say that he selected history as a field of study in order to illustrate in it the laws of sociology, but in his history of Rome the controlling forces which he finds in operation are economic, and he deals little in the psychology of the mass, though much in that of the individual. Ferrero's work is much more like that of the traditional historian than Lamprecht's. In it, specific statements of fact are more numerous, and wide generalities form a less proportion of the whole, but one does not need to read far in either book to perceive the controlling influence of the imagination in the new history in comparison with the stricter scientific faculties, and the constant occurrence of sweeping generalizations, charming to the reader and attractive to the mind, until they are submitted to cold analysis. My purpose here, however, is not to criticize, it is rather to call your attention to these two works, most stimulating to thought, which it will be found useful to read together and to compare with one another if one desires to understand the methods and character of much history that will be written in the near future.

You will have seen by this time, I am sure, that in my opinion this allied attack upon the field of history by the five divisions whose

advance I have briefly sketched is not an affair of the moment, but formidable in character and likely to last at least one swing of the pendulum of time. Are we not indeed forced to ask if this phrase does not imply something of its real character? Is it a swinging back of the pendulum? Is this disturbance in our province, this recrudescence of philosophy, symptomatic of what is occurring in the whole realm of thought? Are we passing from an age of investigation to an age of speculation? There are I think on all sides, in many ways, signs that this may very possibly be the case. My immediate predecessor in this office paid his respects to the vagaries of Christian Science. I do not think he would disagree with me in seeing in the wide vogue of that cult a significant sign of far-reaching popular reaction away from science towards speculation. Christian Science as properly calls itself Christian as any of its pietistic forerunners in the history of religion, but it ludicrously miscalls itself science. It is rather, as a little intelligent study of its literature makes clear, a denial of validity to the fundamental principles upon which all science rests. Even in the field of physical science itself, in some of its most rapidly advancing branches, in the writings of some who are considered among its foremost representatives, there may be seen some faint signs of a similar revival of philosophy in speculations on the immortality of the soul, on the earth as the only abode of life, on the habitability of Mars, and in some of those on the ultimate bearings of the discovery of radium.

Whether this be true or not, and the prediction of a general reaction is too venturesome to be made here, it seems certain to me at least that in our own field a reaction is well under way and not to be avoided. For more than fifty years the historian has had possession of the field and has deemed it his sufficient mission to determine what the fact was, including the immediate conditions which gave it shape. Now he finds himself confronted with numerous groups of aggressive and confident workers in the same field who ask not what was the fact—many of them seem to be comparatively little interested in that—but their constant question is what is the ultimate explanation of history, or, more modestly, what are the forces which determine human events and according to what laws do they act. This is nothing else than a new flaming up of interest in the philosophy, or the science of history. No matter what disguise may be worn in a given case, no matter what the name may be by which a given group elects to call itself, no matter how small, in the immensity of influences which make the whole, may be the force in which it would find the final explanation of history, the emphatic assertion which they all make is that history is the orderly progression of

mankind to a definite end, and that we may know and state the laws which control the actions of men in organized society. This is the one common characteristic of all the groups I have described; and it is of each of them the one most prominent characteristic. We must also recognize the special significance of the fact that this demand for a philosophy of history is not now made by poets, philosophers, or theologians. The men who make it invoke the name of science. Some of them indeed acknowledge a close alliance with the philosophers and conjure much with metaphysics, but others of the same name will warmly repudiate such an alliance and speak of metaphysics in disrespectful language. All alike, however, lay claim in special degree to the methods, purposes and results of science as their own. All of them seem to look with more or less well-concealed contempt on the historian, and to regard their own work as of a higher type, more truly scientific, and more nearly final in character than ours.

What is the historian to do about it? It is useless to pooh-pooh this movement, or to underestimate it, to call it a passing wave of thought which will soon sink to its real level and lose the relative importance which it now assumes. It must be confessed that this is the attitude which trained historians, at least those of us who have lived most of our active lives in the sharper air of science, are still inclined to take. But it is an impossible attitude. The new interpretation of history brings us too much that is convincing, despite all the mere speculation that goes with it; its contribution to a better understanding of our problems is already too valuable; we are ourselves too clearly conscious in these later days of the tangled network of influences we are striving to unravel; of the hidden forces upon the borders of whose action we arrive in our own explorations, to justify us in ignoring or in denying the worth of those results which are reached by other ways than ours. We may perhaps find warrant for an exercise of discrimination, which does not always seem possible to them, but further than that it is not likely that we can go.

Nor is it of any use to deny the possibility of a science, or a philosophy of history. The existence of such a possibility is one of the most profound questions which has ever occupied human thought. Since man first began to ask about the destiny of the race, as I have already said, he has been trying to find the answer, and some of the most comprehensive philosophic systems that have been constructed in the history of thought, like that of Hegel for instance, are really nothing more than attempts to formulate, and show the operation of, the one controlling principle that has shaped all human achievement, or indeed all action, material as well as human, since the spirit of

God first moved upon the face of the waters. The revived interest in this problem during the past twenty-five years has already produced a great literature. If we do not misread the signs of the present they point plainly to a still more active discussion of this question during the next twenty-five years, and to a still larger literature about it. Whatever may be true of those of us who may now look forward to the not distant enjoyment of a well-earned pension, it certainly behooves the young historian to obtain a clear understanding of exactly what this question means, and what its relation is to the work which he proposes to do.

The question what the science, or philosophy of history is, or whether such things are possible to our knowledge, I do not propose to discuss here. It would be absurd within the limits of time, it would be equally absurd within the limits of the occasion of this address to undertake such a discussion. And did time and the stage both permit, such a discussion could only be undertaken by one who had devoted long study to the question, as I certainly have not. There are, however, certain distinctions which it seems necessary to make at the outset of all thinking on the subject, which may perhaps well be stated by an outsider and which may be found useful by the historian who is often puzzled, I think, by the things which are said by the newcomers about his field of work.

In the first place, the phrase "the science of history" is used in contemporary discussion in certain quite distinct meanings which it should be the first duty of the disputant who speaks in the name of science to discriminate and keep clearly apart in his argument. They are, however, as a matter of fact oftentimes so inextricably mixed that not merely is the reader confused, but it is evident that the writer's own thought has arrived at no clear understanding of the terms he is using. One of these meanings we have in the question, Is history a science or an art? I should feel that I ought to apologize for raising this question here, had not so much been written upon it. To any clear thinking, in my opinion, the question is absurd, and one with which no working historian need concern himself. It attempts to make a distinction which does not exist. It goes on the supposition that two things are mutually exclusive between which there exists no incompatibility, no anthesis, no contradiction. It carries on its face the indication that he who asks it is thinking chiefly of history as a branch of literature and that he has no clear conception of what he means by history as a science, for certainly whether he means this phrase to refer to the method of collecting historical material, or to the character of the problems which history raises, history as an art is not thereby affected. Any

historian, of any school of thought, may make his history art if he is able to do so. History must remain one of the highest branches of literature. In some future time the drama of human action on the stage of the world's history will be unfolded in a great work of art, immortal in itself like all great works of art, but this will only be when the facts of history which are necessary to its truth, and therefore to its permanence as art, are finally established. Till that time comes the work of the man who writes history as literature will be more ephemeral than that of the man who records his scientific work upon the facts of the past, even though the latter's monograph be forgotten and his name perish. May I add that the approach of that day is not hastened by the criticisms of estimable gentlemen who desire to find, in pleasant reading, relaxation and entertainment at the close of an arduous day and to cherish at the same time the fond imagination that they are cultivating their minds in the acquirement of historical knowledge? It would seem at times as if this were the source from which comes at present the chief demand for history as an art, and as if this were the audience chiefly sought by the artistic historian. I would not, however, unduly disparage the writing of history as literature. I do desire to emphasize strongly the difference between the literary historian and the one whose ambition it is not to produce fine art but to add something to the sum of human knowledge.

A second use of the phrase "the science of history" is with reference to the method of historical investigation and to the validity of its results. In ascertaining and classifying the objective facts with which history deals can methods which are really scientific be employed—and this includes the somewhat different and subordinate question, can the same methods be employed as in the ascertaining and classifying of facts in the natural and physical sciences? Upon our answer to this question depends our answer to another; *viz.*, have the conclusions established by these methods a degree of validity really scientific? These questions are of course most fundamental for every man who concerns himself with the facts of history, no matter from what point of view he regards them. The answer which is to be given to them is of vital importance alike to the political historian and to the sociologist, but it should be clearly perceived that they concern methods of work only and the trustworthiness of data. They are wholly different questions from that which is raised by the five groups of students whom I have especially named in their demand for a science of history, and the unqualified affirmative with which, as I have already said, I believe we must answer the former questions, has no bearing on our mental

attitude towards the latter demand. Nor has it indeed upon the somewhat different and subordinate question whether the scientific method of historical investigation is the same as that employed in the natural and physical sciences. Upon this question I have nothing to say in this place.

A third meaning of the phrase "the science of history" is that in which the sociologist or the social psychologist uses it when he is speaking with care. In this sense it raises the question, Are the objective facts with which the historian deals, the past actions of the race, determined in their occurrence by forces acting according to fixed laws, and similar in character and method of operation to the forces which are at work in the sphere of the natural and physical sciences? This is the one question which the new movement in history, from the days of Comte and Buckle, has persistently pushed to the front. It is towards the solution of this question that, in my opinion, its most important contributions have been made, more important than the light, nevertheless great, which it has thrown on particular historical problems, and also notwithstanding the baseless speculation which has attended, and does attend, its work. This is, in my opinion again, the most proper meaning of the phrase "the science of history", and the possibility of such a science I believe to be the great question of the future in the new study and writing of history. May I venture to say that I am convinced that in this sense history is a science, that the events with which it is concerned have been determined by forces which act according to fixed law, and that most of the objections which have been urged against this view are due to misapprehensions, or incomplete reflection?

If a fourth point to which I would call attention is not strictly speaking a distinct meaning of the phrase "the science of history", it is an idea which has played a large part in the discussion of the subject. This is the assertion that even if laws control the destinies of men, those laws are unknowable, that no amount of investigation and study will ever enable us to formulate them, or to come to a knowledge of the great system, the universe of conscious action, in which they work together in one harmonious whole. While I believe it is possible to show that an argument of this kind is also founded on misapprehension, my purpose here is merely to point out that however clearly one may seem to prove that the laws of history are beyond our grasp, he has taken no step towards proving that they do not exist; this argument should be confined to showing that a science of history is beyond our comprehension and construction, and not be used to prove that there is in reality no such thing.

It is perhaps necessary to add that the objective existence of a science of history, if it were clearly established, would in its turn not prove that we are capable of its discovery and formulation.

These are, I am certain, clearly distinct shades of meaning which are suggested by the phrase "the science of history", and I believe it is of the greatest importance to keep them distinct in our thinking and writing, as certainly has not always been done. But if there are distinctions to be made in the term "science of history", what shall be said of the term "philosophy of history"? Here, however, I am not going to assert that a distinction really exists between the terms "science" and "philosophy", which have been used as synonymous by almost everyone who has written upon these problems. The most that I can say is that if such a distinction could be made on valid grounds it would be exceedingly useful. The key to the suggestion which I am going to venture upon is found in a passage which I quote from Flint's *History of the Philosophy of History*.⁵ He says: "As a rule, the historians who have had no explicit philosophy of history have had but a very meagre implicit one, and the aversion which they have shown to historical generalization has had its source mainly in their own want of generalizing power." To this I should like to add a quotation from the presidential address delivered to this Association by its first president, Andrew D. White. He said in 1884: "Buckle has shown that without a true historical synthesis special investigations and discoveries often lead us far from any valuable fruits, and that such special investigations may be worse than no investigations at all."⁶ Such authoritative assertions of the need of a guiding philosophy of history for the best historical work may seem rather discouraging to some of us, who have not been greatly conscious of any such need, but you will notice that both passages emphasize the importance of such a philosophy, as a help to generalization, for such I take it is the meaning of the quotation from President White's address. If now we turn for help in understanding these hard sayings to our brethren of the natural and physical sciences, whose older processes have received more conscious differentiation, I think we shall learn that the scientist in those fields distinguishes clearly between the actual scientific work which he is doing, and what he believes to be the ultimate drift of that work. He says: "These observed and measured facts I have in hand; this force, which I can isolate, acts always in this way; the law of its action I can state in these definite terms. These things make up my science." But over and beyond these things, he says:

⁵ *The History of the Philosophy of History: France* (1894), p. 14.

⁶ *Papers of the American Historical Association* (1885), I. 6.

"I believe such and such is the composition of the atom; such and such is the nature of matter and of force." But he mingles these two sets of conclusions in no intellectual confusion. He knows that his theory of the composition of the atom, of the nature of force, is no direct part of his scientific process. He understands that it is given him by the sudden leaping forward of the imagination to discern the yet distant end towards which the plodding steps of science seem to be tending. This is his philosophy of matter and of force. But though he perceives that he has not reached it by the same valid process as the facts he knows and the laws he can state, and though he holds it subject to instant modification when new discoveries of science open a vision of new results, his final philosophy of nature is nevertheless the master light of all his seeing; it shows the direction of each new step; it reveals to his search the unifying generalization which brings order into the mass of newly collected facts. If we are to distinguish between the science and the philosophy of history, this should be the function of the latter. Our philosophy of history should be our conviction as to the direction in which our scientific study is tending, our belief as to the ultimate nature of history and the final destinies of the race, our answer to the riddle of human existence. It should be to us a source of inspiration and of courage, but we should not confuse it with our science.

But I have not yet really answered my question, What should the historian do in view of the threatened invasion of his domain by ideals and methods not quite his own? I have been occupied in saying what and how he should think. For the young historian I cannot answer the question. I seem to see many an attempt by the trained historian proper to meet the leaders of the new movement, whether regarded as enemies or allies, with their own weapons, and to turn some of their positions into a part of our own line of defense. Every attempt to unite the old and the new, to find a common standing-ground for all workers at what are really common tasks, ought to secure the hearty support of all historians. The men who try this from our side will be found however in most cases, I believe, to be the younger men. To those whose methods of work are fixed, whose training in investigation makes change not easy, and who will perhaps feel some discouragement for their own science, as this new movement broadens and deepens, I have one word of comfort, and it is to me at least of large comfort. It is this. All science which is true science must rest upon the proved and correlated fact. It can have no other foundation than this. All premature generalization, all generalization from hasty observation, from half-understood facts, is useless and often worse than

useless. I am well aware that premature generalization, that wrong generalization, from misunderstood fact, is one of the necessary methods of scientific advance, but it is only so when it truly rests upon the best knowledge of the fact which contemporary science can furnish. At the very beginning of all conquest of the unknown lies the fact, established and classified to the fullest extent possible at the moment. To lay such foundations, to furnish such materials for later builders, may be a modest ambition, but it is my firm belief that in our field of history, for a long time to come, the man who devotes himself to such labors, who is content with this preliminary work, will make a more useful and a more permanent contribution to the final science, or philosophy of history, than will he who yields to the allurements of speculation and endeavors to discover in the present stage of our knowledge the forces that control society, or to formulate the laws of their action. None of the new battle-cries should sound for us above the call of our first leader, proclaiming the chief duty of the historian to establish *wie es eigentlich gewesen*. We have been told that to this should be added *wie es eigentlich geworden*; but let us not be deceived. To the true historian the being of a fact has always included all that portion of its becoming which belongs to the definite understanding of it. What is more than that we can safely leave to others. The field of the historian is, and must long remain, the discovery and recording of what actually happened.

But this does not preclude his cherishing a philosophy of history in the sense of Buckle, and Flint, and White, in the quotations I have just made. He may well hold to the belief that the facts which he is establishing tend to prove this or that final explanation of history. By such a belief his labors may be lightened and rendered more effective. In this sense it may indeed be true that God has conceded two sights to a man. One, of time's completed plan. That is our philosophy of history, under the stimulus of which we work. The other of the minute's work, man's first step to the plan's completeness. That is our daily labor in building up by long and right investigation the science of history.

GEORGE BURTON ADAMS.